

Session 10-03, a Special Meeting of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission was called to order by Chair Bremicker at 5:30 p.m. on October 25, 2010 at the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.

PRESENT: COMMISSIONERS BREMICKER, HARRALD, BRANN, CARLINSCHAUER, CUMMING

ABSENT: COMMISSIONER ARCHIBALD (EXCUSED), DICKERSON (RESIGNED)

STAFF: PLANNING TECHNICIAN JULIE ENGBRETSSEN  
RECREATION SPECIALIST/COMMUNITY SCHOOLS COORDINATOR MIKE ILLG  
PARKS MAINTENANCE COORDINATOR ANGIE OTTESON  
DEPUTY CITY CLERK I RENEE KRAUSE

### **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

BRANN/HARRALD - MOVED TO APPROVE THE AGENDA.

The agenda was approved by consensus of the Commission.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

*(Minutes are approved during Regular Meetings.)*

There were no minutes for approval.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

There were no public comments.

### **VISITORS**

The Kachemak Bay Wooden Boat Society is postponed to November 18, 2010 Regular Meeting.

### **RECONSIDERATION**

There were no items scheduled for reconsideration.

### **STAFF AND COUNCIL REPORTS/COMMITTEE REPORTS/BOROUGH REPORTS**

Mike Illg updated the Commissioners on the following:

1. A Memorandum of Agreement is being drawn up between the City and Jack Gist Park Association, comprised of Adult Softball League, Homer High School Softball, Homer Little League and Disc Golf. This is a work in progress.
2. The gate and drainage is in progress, there were monies appropriated by Council along with Grant monies received. The gate is to be placed at the entrance to the park to control entry into the park to control vandals. There has been vandalism already done to the water holding tank that was purchased by the Adult Softball League had purchased this to water the field. Due to the isolated conditions the park will be off limits when not in use to vehicle traffic. Keys will be distributed to members of the association and the city personnel. There is a turn-around access for vehicles who do visit the park when it is closed. It was recommended to install signage that will indicate whether the park is open or closed. Drainage will probably be addressed in the spring.
3. Karen Hornaday Park - he is working on organizing an informal meeting to include all users to discuss what is actually wanted for the playground in the park, fundraising efforts, volunteer base to establish a new playground. The current funds have been allocated to drainage issues and parking lot which is ADA Accessible. There are minimal funds available as seed money to parlay into grants for new equipment. Mr. Illg commented on the work done by Soldotna on Riverfront Park.

4. He has been given the green light by the City Manager to perform a Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment. He would like the participation of the commission and additional entities and the public as required. He would like the support from the Commission to perform this assessment. This will be a comprehensive project that will be very important to the future of parks, recreation, trails and sports organizations in this area. The Needs Assessment will cover all aspects of parks and recreation to include:

- a. what the city currently has
- b. how it operates
- c. how is it funded
- d. what we would like to have
- e. what are the funding options
- f. what are people willing to pay for
- g. would the assessment cover just city residents or encompass the surrounding area
- h. establishment of a recreational service area if supported
- i. he would coordinate the assessment - he has never done this type of thing but he will be starting a graduate program in public administration and he has consulted the instructor on conducting this assessment.
- j. there may be some minimal costs conducting this assessment; much will be conducted with volunteers and donations.
- k. requires participation and support including advertisement for this assessment

Commissioner Brann inquired what the proposed timeline would be for this project. Mr. Illg responded that 12-18 months from inception to completion including formulating a survey, compiling results, etc.

There was a brief discussion regarding additional participation by members of the different groups that would be approached; and multiple ways to perform a needs assessment. Mr. Illg acknowledged that it is not always recommended to impose a special tax in a down economy but when times are tough the budget to get reduced first is the parks and recreation budgets. It was agreed that the time frame is realistic for conducting the assessment. However, it would be great if it happened quicker.

The structure of how to handle or establish a committee was discussed and the action or participation required of the Commission. Planning Technician Engebretsen suggested a Steering Committee organized by Mr. Illg. Chair Bremicker requested that the term or phrase "stakeholder" not be used when soliciting for volunteers or members. Further discussion included the need to have a good core group of people involved in the project and naming the project.

HARRALD/CARLINSCHAUER - MOVED TO SUPPORT A PARKS AND RECREATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR THE CITY OF HOMER AND SURROUNDING AREAS. THE CONTENT OF WHICH TO BE UNDER THE OVERSIGHT OF RECREATION COORDINATOR MIKE ILLG.

At this time since it is not formally on the agenda but done under Staff Reports and the green light has been given by the City Manager no formal motion of support is required. Mr. Illg just felt it would be better to include the Commission since they are advisory to the Council on these matters.

The motion to fully support the Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment by Approved by Consensus of the Commission.

There was further discussion regarding a hand out distributed by Commissioner Brann of recreational related entities and businesses. The listing can be added and the commissioners were encouraged to add to the listing. It was suggested to contact those on the list and see if they would like to appear and speak to the Commission and since there are limited meetings schedule up to 3 and allow 5 minutes or so of time to present the Commission with information, wants, needs, etc. Commissioner Harrald will get that in motion. Notice of attendance must be provided to Staff or the Clerk so the agenda can be prepared appropriately.

There was no further discussion.

Parks Maintenance Coordinator Angie Otteson reported on the following:

1. She inquired about the status of the gate for Jack Gist Park with Public Works and they are waiting on the contractor to perform some work but installation is scheduled to be completed before the ground freezes.
2. A Park Walk Through was discussed and the Commissioners agreed to meet November 18, 2010 at 4:00 p.m. Karen Hornaday Park and Bayview Park prior to the regular meeting. It was noted that Karen Hornaday was in dire need of attention. The playground was community built several years ago and most of the driftwood has rotted and been removed. Bayview Park is excellent for small children since it was fenced. **Ms. Otteson mentioned that there was interest and grants available to install equipment that is user friendly to younger children. All funding and installation must be accepted by City Council.**
3. The new website will have information for all the parks in the City.
4. Camping Revenues increased by \$7700 for the Spit Camping and \$2400 for Karen Hornaday. There were actually fewer campers but they stayed longer. It was noted that parking fees on the spit were the Port & Harbors. This Commission actually has no budget and if any monies are needed they must solicit City Council for funding.
5. The Spit Plan comments have been improving the facilities and adding more. Plus keeping the open and green spaces. The park/campground near the Lagoon is a big revenue maker.
6. A tree inventory was conducted by a firm out of Anchorage. Most of the species are mountain ash and blue Colorado spruce in the City parks. They are approximately worth \$300,000.00. The workshop held covered how to prune and plant trees.

There was no further discussion.

#### **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

No public hearings were scheduled.

#### **PENDING BUSINESS**

- A. Spit Comprehensive Plan - Draft dated September 15, 2010  
Review and Discussion on the Proposed Recreational and Park Goals for the Spit.

The draft plan in the packet was incorrect a newer draft dated September 28, 2010 was distributed by Planning Technician Engebretsen.

Commissioner Brann opened discussion by giving an overall view of the plan is quite good, lots of vision to it. He would like to see added interpretive signage where it would explain what a Tsunami is, not just warning signs, explaining what the sirens are; examples of what city he visited has a "cow siren" that is used as the practice or testing siren. That way residents can tell the difference. He then addressed developing bike trail further down the Spit in the heavily populated section. He noted the wide shoulder from Mariner Park to the Light House.

A discussion regarding the hazards of pedestrian crossing in that area where line of sight is extremely limited. A designated crosswalk at the entrance, and relocating the entrance to Mariner Park. It was noted that constructing a tunnel or expanding the bike path was not looked upon favorably by the Public however they did approve of moving the entrance. Discussion ensued on the benefits of moving the entrance, DOT approving a crosswalk, and installation of signage to make visibility to motorists and reducing the speed in that area. Commissioner CarlinSchauer would fully support a reduction in speed after the entrance was relocated. Chair Bremicker noted the hazards at the intersection of Spit Road and Kachemak Drive and to just extend the 35 mph speed to past the entrance. It was noted that reduction in speed may be a revenue producer if monitored when changed.

Additional topics discussed were the following:

1. Restrooms in Mariner Park - regular restroom would require lift station since uphill for sewer.
2. The plan is a guideline for the future development of the Spit it is not a detailed document that would address such details as discussed for restrooms.

3. Relocating the Harbormasters Office to the other side of the Harbor. This would allow the start of developing the required infrastructure for that side of the spit.
4. Developing the area around Pier One Theater as a park and gathering place and a landmark plaza and drop-off zone on the current Harbormaster's Office site is a really good idea.

A brief discussion on the City of Seward outdoor pavilion is really nice modeled after an old fashion train station. It was noted by Staff that a new harbor office is high on the CIP listing and they may be willing to have it relocated. Commissioners discussed the benefits of relocating the harbor office would generate the infrastructure needed to develop that side of the spit.

Commissioner Cumming arrived at 6:32 p.m.

Commissioner Harrald was concerned that there was more focused on the parking in comparison to the green and open spaces. She noted that the same people came to the meetings and she was surprised that even the businesses on the Spit did not come to the public meetings. She has researched other beach parks in the Lower 48 and even accepting that the City does not have the funding, but to not even consider it for the future is a bit discouraging for her. **Commissioner Harrald noted that the existing parks are downplayed. None are prioritized.**

Chair Bremicker noted that the Spit in other towns would be mostly industrial, but here it is a mix of marine industrial, commercial, residential, and recreational. The public walking on the beach do not come to the meetings but you visit the spit and they are walking the beach under the assumption that it will always be available. People come here for the fish and view, any harm and it would cut the city's throat.

It was noted that parks and recreation is not a high priority on the city's list. When looking to save money they look to parks and recreation first. The City of Seward implemented a plan to make parks and recreation a priority. They purchased land and made it available for camping providing revenue for the city. Doing this generates close to half a million dollars each year which provides revenue and jobs for Seward. This also encourages people to visit Seward and to come back each year too. If Homer addresses this especially in this economy it would benefit the city. The more money that comes into Homer provides for the residents who live here year round also.

It was noted that public comments received were in favor of keeping the existing parks and camping on the spit. But here was a proposal to giving up some campsites to the Wooden Boat Society. A brief discussion on the areas suitable for RV camping on the Spit and increased problems with safety hazards and congestion this would promote followed. As time goes on and the city budget gets smaller the City wants to know where the revenue comes from to support the parks and recreation for locals and visitors alike. It is apparent that this Commission should support keeping a hold on all revenue producing areas.

A dialogue was held on the benefits to the city to leasing the land or operating the campgrounds themselves.

Commissioner CarlinSchauer commented on the need to clean up the Spit before trying to increase revenue. This is a priority to him being a newcomer to the city. He strongly believes that cleaning the Spit up would bring more revenue. He compared the area to Switzerland in beauty but the junk that has been allowed to accumulate and not addressed is unbelievable. The junk cars and boats should be addressed.

Additional dialogue on the following:

- a. designation on the city owned land around the ice rink is owned by English Bay.
- b. creating a destination feel to the cruise ship area
- c. constructing a pedestrian trail/walking path from the cruise ships

- d. connecting the different boardwalks making that an experience in itself gets the cars off the road and keeps the people out of traffic.
- e. making the walkways themed, interesting - such as Homer is cited as the Art Community so put art there.
- f. this would reduce safety issues.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

##### **A. Proposed Change in Meeting Time**

A brief discussion was held regarding the proposed meeting time change from 6:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. it was noted that this proposed change to the bylaws is to be introduced at a meeting then action taken at the next meeting of the commission.

The commissioners present expressed comments in favor of changing the time of the regular meetings.

There was no further discussion.

##### **B. Kachemak Drive Bike/Pedestrian Path**

Chair Bremicker stated he had to leave to attend a prior commitment and left the meeting at 6:55 p.m.

Commissioner CarlinSchauer stated he actually had another commitment and would have to leave which would leave them with no quorum.

HARRALD/CUMMING - MOVED TO POSTPONE THE NEW BUSINESS ITEM B. KACHEMAK DRIVE BIKE/PEDESTRIAN PATH TO THE NEXT REGULAR MEETING.

There was no discussion.

The motion to postpone to the next regular meeting was approved by consensus.

#### **INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS**

- A. Letters of Congratulations and Appointment to Thomas CarlinSchauer, Robert Archibald and Dave Brann dated September 15, 2010.
- B. City Council Budget Schedule

There was no discussion on the informational materials.

#### **COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE**

There were no audience comments.

#### **COMMENTS OF STAFF MEMBERS**

There were no staff comments.

#### **COMMENTS OF THE COUNCIL MEMBER *(if one is assigned)***

None.

#### **COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION**

Commissioner Brann, Harrald, and CarlinSchauer had no comments.

Commissioner Cumming expressed why she arrived late to the meeting. She attended the Council meeting that started at 6:00 p.m. and she thought their meeting started at 6:30 p.m. She additionally felt that there was going to be a lot things on the agenda next month and expressed concerns about be able to address all the items.

**COMMENTS OF THE CHAIR**

None.

**ADJOURN**

There being no further business to come before the Commission Vice Chair Harrauld adjourned the meeting at 7:15 p.m. The next regular meeting is Thursday, NOVEMBER 18, 2010 at 6:30 p.m. at the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers.

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RENEE KRAUSE, CMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK I

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_